

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

March 1, 2004
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Marshall, Deputy Mayor Noble, and Councilmembers Balducci, Chelminiak, Davidson, Degginger, and Lee

ABSENT: None

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Noble opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and announced recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss one item of labor negotiations.

The meeting resumed at 6:25 p.m. with Mayor Marshall presiding. She noted that Council discussed a second Executive Session item pertaining to property disposition.

2. Study Session

(a) Bridle Trails Tree Committee

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened a discussion with the Bridle Trails Tree Committee regarding tree retention recommendations for their neighborhood.

Planning Director Dan Stroh explained that current City regulations exempt existing single-family lots from tree retention requirements although erosion control permits are required if 1,000 square feet of canopy (approximately three trees) is removed. Council previously decided against establishing a citywide policy on tree retention but is willing to consider neighborhood-specific strategies. In December 2001 at the request of Bridle Trails residents, Council initiated an update to the Bridle Trails Subarea Plan to address tree preservation policies. The Bridle Trails Tree Committee, established in early 2002, conducted a survey regarding tree retention, discussed alternative approaches with residents, and prepared a proposal for Council consideration.

Mr. Stroh said staff recommends initiating Land Use Code and Clear and Grade Code amendments for tree retention in the Bridle Trails subarea for properties zoned R-1, using the

Bridle Trails Tree Committee's recommendation as a starting point. He introduced the following neighborhood representatives: Norm Hansen, Ellen Kerr, and Gary Smith.

Mr. Hansen, representing the Bridle Trails Community Club, said the proposal is intended to prevent clear-cutting without compromising private property rights with regard to trees. There have been three significant instances of clear-cutting in the past few years including one incident in which 137 trees were removed from two acres of land. In a survey of approximately 2,000 homeowners one year ago, 69 percent indicated a preference for increased protection of trees on single-family lots. The Bridle Trails Community Club has held nine meetings during the past two years, as well as nine Board meetings, and the topic of trees has been discussed at every meeting.

Mr. Smith, Chair of the Bridle Trails Tree Committee, said he was initially attracted to the Bridle Trails neighborhood in part because of its trees and the city's designation as a Tree City USA. He noted the value of trees including their natural beauty, privacy screening, support of wildlife habitat, function as noise barriers, and role in maintaining the watershed. In recent years, Mr. Smith became concerned about several incidents of clear-cutting in his neighborhood including the removal of 164 trees along 132nd Avenue NE in the fall of 2003. Sixteen residents have served on the Bridle Trails Tree Committee during the past two years.

Mr. Smith said a survey of Bridle Trails residents in October 2002 indicated that respondents have lived in the neighborhood for an average of 16.8 years. The BT Tree Committee then worked with City staff to develop the current proposal. The Committee met with Deputy Mayor Noble, Councilmember Degginger, and City staff on January 20, 2004, to finalize the proposal.

Mr. Smith reviewed the three main objectives of the proposal:

1. For developed and vacant single-family lots with R-1 zoning, adopt new regulations to preserve all significant trees along the site perimeter and a minimum of 25 percent of the significant trees within the site's interior. Significant trees are healthy trees, eight inches or greater in diameter, as measured four feet above the existing grade.
2. Reduce the potential for clear-cutting of a developed or undeveloped parcel as a way of bypassing the City's subdivision tree preservation requirements. As a deterrent, impose a waiting period of three to five years from the time of clear-cutting to the time a property could be subdivided.
3. Provide a tree management plan to preserve trees and encourage reforestation.

Dr. Davidson noted the need to define site perimeter, for instance in terms of feet.

Mr. Chelminiak commented it could be necessary to remove perimeter trees due to disease or other reasons. He questioned whether there was any discussion about requirements for the size and/or maturity of replacement trees. Mr. Hansen said residents are primarily interested in preventing the worst-case scenarios of clear-cutting that have occurred.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Noble, Mr. Smith confirmed that the purpose of the proposal is to initiate the development of an ordinance by City staff that would contain more specific details.

- ➡ Deputy Mayor Noble moved to initiate Land Use Code and Clear & Grade Code amendments for tree retention for areas in Bridle Trails zoned R-1, using the Bridle Trails Tree Committee's proposal as the starting point. Mr. Degginger seconded the motion.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. Stroh acknowledged that the proposal represents a departure for the City Council in terms of establishing policies for one specific subarea. The Enatai community is also interested in tree preservation, while some neighborhoods are more interested in preserving mountain and/or water views.

Mr. Degginger expressed support for the process that has brought this issue before the Council. Mr. Lee concurred and noted the costs associated with developing any new rule or regulation.

Mr. Chelminiak congratulated the Bridle Trails community for its work to protect the trees that define this neighborhood.

- ➡ The motion to initiate Land Use Code and Clear & Grade Code amendments for tree retention for areas in Bridle Trails zoned R-1, using the Bridle Trails Tree Committee's proposal as the starting point, carried by a vote of 7-0.

Mr. Stroh said staff will work with the Planning Commission to draft an ordinance and hold a public hearing on the proposal.

(b) New City Building – Public Safety

Mr. Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the Public Safety components of the New City Building.

Police Chief Jim Montgomery noted that the New City Building will address current facility deficiencies and improve Public Safety operations. He introduced Deputy Chief Dave Gans and Deputy Chief Linda Pillo.

Emergency Preparedness Manager Barb Graff explained that the success of the City's emergency operations planning over the years has led to partnerships with King County, neighboring cities, Bellevue School District, Red Cross, Overlake Hospital, Puget Sound Energy, AT&T Wireless, Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, Washington State Office of Emergency Management, Boeing, and Bellevue Square. Public Safety functions including Police and Fire Department staff, the 911 Communications Center, and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will all be located in the New City Building. Ms. Graff recalled that Bellevue signed on as the first city partner to King County's Regional Disaster Plan. As the largest of 22 cities in Zone 1, Bellevue has agreed to host representatives from other cities in the event of an emergency. The New City Building accommodates Bellevue's commitments and growing leadership in regional emergency response.

Alan Komenski, Communications Center Manager, said the Center's staff is eager to move to the new building, particularly since the group of 50 employees is working in a facility designed for approximately 20. The Center serves a population of 700,000 and processes approximately 500,000 customer contacts per year. Mr. Komenski said the new Communications Center will

meet strict national fire protection standards, which will have a positive impact on insurance ratings for the City and its customers. The new building will facilitate improved operations management, enhanced technical control over the Center's systems, and a closer working relationship with other Police Department functions.

Debbie Brennan, Police Records Supervisor, explained that the new building will provide a larger public lobby for the Police Department with private interview rooms for speaking to victims and witnesses and a self-service copier. The Police Property/Evidence Room will be located on the ground floor of the new building, which will be more cost-effective and convenient for staff and the public.

Corporal John Manning said the consolidation of Public Safety functions will enhance efficiencies and thereby provide more hours of officer time on the street. The new building will provide enhanced centralized services for the public as well. Corporal Manning said he and his colleagues look forward to working in the new building because it will enable them to provide better services to the public while enhancing officer safety.

Fire Chief Peter Lucarelli thanked Council on behalf of the Fire Department for this tremendous investment in Public Safety functions and improved services to the community.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Mr. Komenski said the existing communications center will be retained as a backup facility. In further response to Mr. Lee, Ms. Brennan described records management improvements including the implementation of a new records/information management system in 2002, the introduction of high-density files, and purging records as allowed by law. The backlog for the data entry of crime reports has increased from two to three months to two to three days over the past few years.

Chief Montgomery commented that the pending move to the new building has challenged staff to review and redesign its business processes and practices.

Mayor Marshall thanked staff for the presentation and their ongoing hard work for the City.

(c) Traffic Signal Systems and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

Transportation Director Goran Sparman explained that this agenda item is in response to Council's request for an overview of the City's traffic signal operations. He invited Councilmembers to visit the traffic control center in the Leavitt Building if they would like a tour and additional information.

Mark Poch, Signal Systems Manager, said the City recently switched from using standard light bulbs in traffic signals to LED bulbs, which are brighter and more energy efficient. He explained how vehicle detection loops in the roadway detect that a car is present and waiting for a signal change. Signals play an important role in channeling traffic, particularly at complex intersections such as Richards Road and Eastgate Way (under I-90). Mr. Poch said the term "cycle" refers to the amount of time between green lights for any given signal.

Bellevue has 173 traffic signals, 21 of which are owned by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) but operated by the City. There are 7,200 street lights in Bellevue; 2,700 are owned and maintained by the City and 4,500 are owned and maintained by Puget Sound Energy. Bellevue's traffic computer system was the first of its kind in the country. It controls 90 percent of the City's signals and allows staff to make real-time signal adjustments to manage holiday traffic, special events, unusual incidents, and emergency situations. There are 19 traffic-monitoring cameras in Bellevue, 10 of which are located downtown.

Mr. Poch explained that signal timing for individual signals or groups of traffic signals is developed with a PC-based model. The information is then loaded into the traffic computer system and can be evaluated and adjusted as needed. Signals are typically coordinated to facilitate the progression of traffic along an arterial or route. However, the timing plan varies according to the time of day and traffic volumes. Mr. Poch noted that traffic on Factoria Boulevard fluctuates frequently. The system allows staff to adjust the signal timing plan throughout the day to best manage traffic flow and reduce delays.

Mr. Poch said people often ask how cycle length is determined. Along any given route or corridor all intersections will have a common cycling interval, which is based on the two busiest major intersections along the route. If the interval is adjusted for a minor street, this will interfere with traffic progression on the main arterial.

Moving to additional challenges and issues, Mr. Poch said the purpose of ramp metering is to maintain flow on the mainline/freeway. However, this can cause traffic backups on arterial streets. Emergency light pre-emption gives priority to Fire and aid units but is disruptive to signal coordination. Similarly, transit signal priority can extend green lights for buses or accelerate the cycle to provide a green light sooner. Mr. Sparrman noted the role of this technology in "smart bus" systems.

Mr. Poch said staff is currently developing an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Plan that is scheduled for completion in May. Bellevue is already utilizing ITS components, however, which provide a strong foundation for the future.

Mr. Degginger encouraged staff to address the heavy backups south of I-90 on roads adjacent to the freeways including Lakemont Boulevard at I-90 and Coal Creek Parkway at I-405. Mayor Marshall concurred. Laurie Gromala, Transportation Assistant Director, explained that the traffic signal at Lakemont Boulevard is under WSDOT's control and is coordinated with the next signal east on I-90, which is within Issaquah's jurisdiction.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Marshall declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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